(a) whether Gulf Air and other International carriers are being allowed equity participation with private operators at the cost of national airlines ;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that international carriers are not permitted to fly in domestic sectors in advanced countries like USA, UK, France as also in SAARC countries ; and

(c) if so, why India is resorting to a policy leading to drainage of large sums of foreign exchange out of India from the share of national carriers ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD) : (a) An investment proposal by M/s. Jet Airways that they may be owned by Tailwinds Limited, a company incorporated in the Isle of Man, in which Gulf Airways and Kuwait Airways would hold shares upto 40% and the balance would be held by NRI, has been approved by the Government.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The benefits accruing out of equity participation are higher as compared to the outflow of foreign exchange.

Losses to Indian Airlines due to strikes

3891. SHRI RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) the losses suffered by Indian Airlines because of strikes in 1992-93 ;

(b) the alternative travel arrangements made for the travelling public and the role played by each private operator during the strikes in Indian Airlines ; and

(c) whether the Open Sky Policy of Government has justified its existence ; if so, the details of incentives/facilities planned for them in the next three years ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD) : (a) Indian Airlines suffered a loss of Rs. 47.97 crores on account of strikes during 1992-93.

(b) During the period of strike from 10th December, 1992 to 25th January, 1993, Indian Airlines operated a contingency schedule based on operation of flights by Executive pilots, Vayudoot aircraft and wet leased aircraft from M/s. Uzbekistan Airways and M/s. Balkan Bulgerian Airlines. Air Taxi operators also increased their operations during the strike period and carried a much larger number of passengers.

(c) 21 permits have been issued to Air Taxi operators out of which 18 are operating flights on the domestic Sector. Fresh Guidelines has been issued as of 1-3-94 for Scheduled Domestic Operators. No specific plan for 3 years has been prepared for incentives/facilities for Air taxis/scheduled domestic operators.

Representations against non grant of advance increments in Air India

3892. SHRI E. BALANANDAN : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether Air India has received representations from its employees with regard to non grant of advance increments to some of them who resigned from Central Government to join Air India ;

(b) whether Government have issued any instructions/guidelines to Air India to settle such representations ;

(c) since how long such representations are pending ; and

(d) when will the same be considered ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) According to Government guidelines employees joining Air India after resignation from Government are to be treated as fresh recruits and their pay regulated according to rules of Air India.

(c) and (d) Representations received from time to time are disposed of in accordance with Government guidelines.

Voluntary Retirement Scheme in Air India

3893. SHRI E. BALANANDAN : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) how many applications were received by Air India as on date for voluntary retirement under the scheme introduced in Air India for officers and other employees :

(b) the details of such applications accepted and rejected with reasons therefor ;

(c) how many applications are pending as on date, and the reasons therefor ;

(d) whether this scheme was changed any time after its introduction ; and

(e) if so, why and what are the changes ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD) : (a) Air India received 113 applications from Officers/Staff for voluntary retirement in terms of the Voluntary Retirement Scheme introduced in December, 1988.

(b) and (c) 95 applications were rejected and 18 were accepted. No application is pending.

The Voluntary Retirement Scheme was introduced primarily with the objective of reducing staff for the purpose of pruning cost and achieving higher productivity. The criteria for acceptance of applications for voluntary retirement was, therefore, based essentially on surrender of posts. Where the concerned Departments were not in a position to surrender the posts, the cases were rejected.

(d) and (e) In 1991, with a view to bringing parity with the Rules in Central Government and other Public Sector Undertakings, the qualifying service for voluntary retirement for Officers/Staff in Air India was reduced to 20 years from 25 years.

Expansion of operational network of IA in Assam

3894. SHRI BHADRESWAR GOHAIN : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any decision of Government to expand the operational network of Indian Airlines in Assam ; and

(b) what is the valid reason for not operating any flights to Lilabari airport of Assam for the last many years ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD) : (a) and (b) Vayudoot is proposing to extend its operations in the North East, under which Lilabari airport would also be covered.

Expansion and growth of Guwahati Airport

3895. SHRI BHADRESWAR GOHAIN : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Calcutta Airport is the main hindrance for the expansion and growth of Guwahati airport ;

(b) by when the Guwahati airport will be completed as growth centre and start operations by itself ; and

(c) whether there is any undue interference from Calcutta airport into the affairs and functioning of the Guwahati airport ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD) : (a) and (c) No, Sir.

(b) Guwahati airport is an all weather operational airport. It is being upgraded as Model Airport. The following works are in progress :—

(i) The Terminal Building is being expanded and modified at an estimated cost of Rs. 12.45 crores to cater to 750 arriving and departing passengers. The airport handles 35 flights per week.

(ii) Apron is being extended at an estimated cost of Rs. 1.8 crores.

(iii) Airport Surveillance Radar and Monopulse Secondary Surveillance Radar are being installed at a cost of Rs. 28.15 crores.

(iv) Ground Lighting facilities are being improved at a cost of Rs. 55 lakhs.

These are expected to be completed by December, 1995.

Revival Schemes for Hotel Ashok Brahmaputra, Guwahati

3896. SHRI BHADRESWAR GOHAIN : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Hotel Ashok Brahmaputra at Guwahati is in the red and is a losing concern ;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government propose to dispose of this prestigious Hotel ; and

(c) if not, what are the revival schemes undertaken by Government to make the Hotel a profit making unit ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) The steps being envisaged by ITDC management to make the Hotel a profit making unit include aggressive marketing efforts, development of human resource by imparting training at all levels, introduction of special tariff/packages, operational cost reduction, etc.

Proposal to Scrap Expenditure tax on Hotels

3897. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Department of Tourism has proposed to the Ministry of Finance to scrap expenditure tax on all Hotels, as part of the package of incentives to the tourism industry ;

(b) if so, the details thereof ;

(c) whether the Ministry of Finance has accepted the proposal and move to cut expenditure tax on hotels ; and

(d) what is the tax burden in each State, including local levies on Hotel industry ?